

LEECH LAKE RESERVOIR DAM,  
DAM TENDER'S RESIDENCE  
Mississippi River Headwaters Reservoirs  
Federal Dam Vicinity  
Cass County  
Minnesota

HAER No. MN-67-A

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
National Park Service  
Rocky Mountain Regional Office  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver, Colorado 80225

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I. Introduction

Location: Leech Lake, Federal Dam Vicinity, Cass  
County, Minnesota

Quad: Federal Dam Quadrangle

UTM: N5233220, E407560

Date of  
Construction: 1902-1904

Present Owner: St. Paul District, U.S. Army Corps of  
Engineers

Significance: The Leech Lake Dam Tender's Residence is one  
of two remaining original dam tender's  
dwellings at the Mississippi Headwaters dam  
sites. Until recently, when the Corps of  
Engineers decided it was no longer necessary  
for personnel to live on the dam site, dam  
tenders and their families lived in the  
houses.

The dam tender's dwelling was one of many  
original structures that formed a complex at  
each of the dam sites, which included service  
buildings, root cellars, chicken coops,  
barns and the dam tender's office. This  
complex of structures allowed dam personnel  
and their families to be self-sufficient.

The Leech Lake Residence was the largest dam  
tender's dwelling built by the Corps at  
a Headwaters dam site. It is a ten-  
room, two-story building of simple frame  
construction.

Historian: Dr. Jane Lamm Carroll  
St. Paul District  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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The Leech Lake Reservoir Dam Tender's Residence

Other than the dam, the only remaining original structure at the dam site is the Leech Lake dam tender's house. The Corps constructed the house between 1902 and 1904. The dwelling is oriented north, with a view of the dam and the wild rice marshes of Leech Lake. It is a ten-room, two-story building of frame construction resting on a concrete foundation, with a poured concrete floor in the basement. Originally it had three brick chimneys that were connected to stoves. The Corps added a hot air furnace in 1914.

The house's gable roof is covered with asbestos cement shingles, while the exterior walls are clad in conventional asbestos shingles. However, early photographs indicate that the house was originally sided with clapboard. Narrow bargeboards at the gable ends have a simple incised design. Some original six-over-six, double-hung sash remains, otherwise the windows are one-over-one. Two sets of dormers in the second story and a shed-roofed front porch were part of the original design. The porch has a simple wooden balustrade and wooden posts with chamfered corners.<sup>1</sup>

The design of the exterior of the house is very simple, with a very utilitarian appearance, and makes little reference to a particular style. The interior finishes and details are evidence of the boarding and lodging facilities that the dam

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tender provided to visiting Corps personnel. The Leech Lake dam site also included a separate building for guests.

The door and baseboard moldings are of high profile and the door surrounds have rosettes at each corner. Their treatment is of standard character for late-19th century millwork. The doors are four-panel, with simple hardware. Some tongue and groove wainscoting survives in the upstairs bathroom. The central staircase is in good condition, with a hardwood rail and turned balusters. Floors throughout are hardwood throughout.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Carole Zellie, "Upper Mississippi Headwaters Reservoirs Damsites Cultural Resources Investigation," Report Prepared for the St. Paul District, Corps of Engineers, 1988, pp. 54-57.
2. Zellie, p.57.